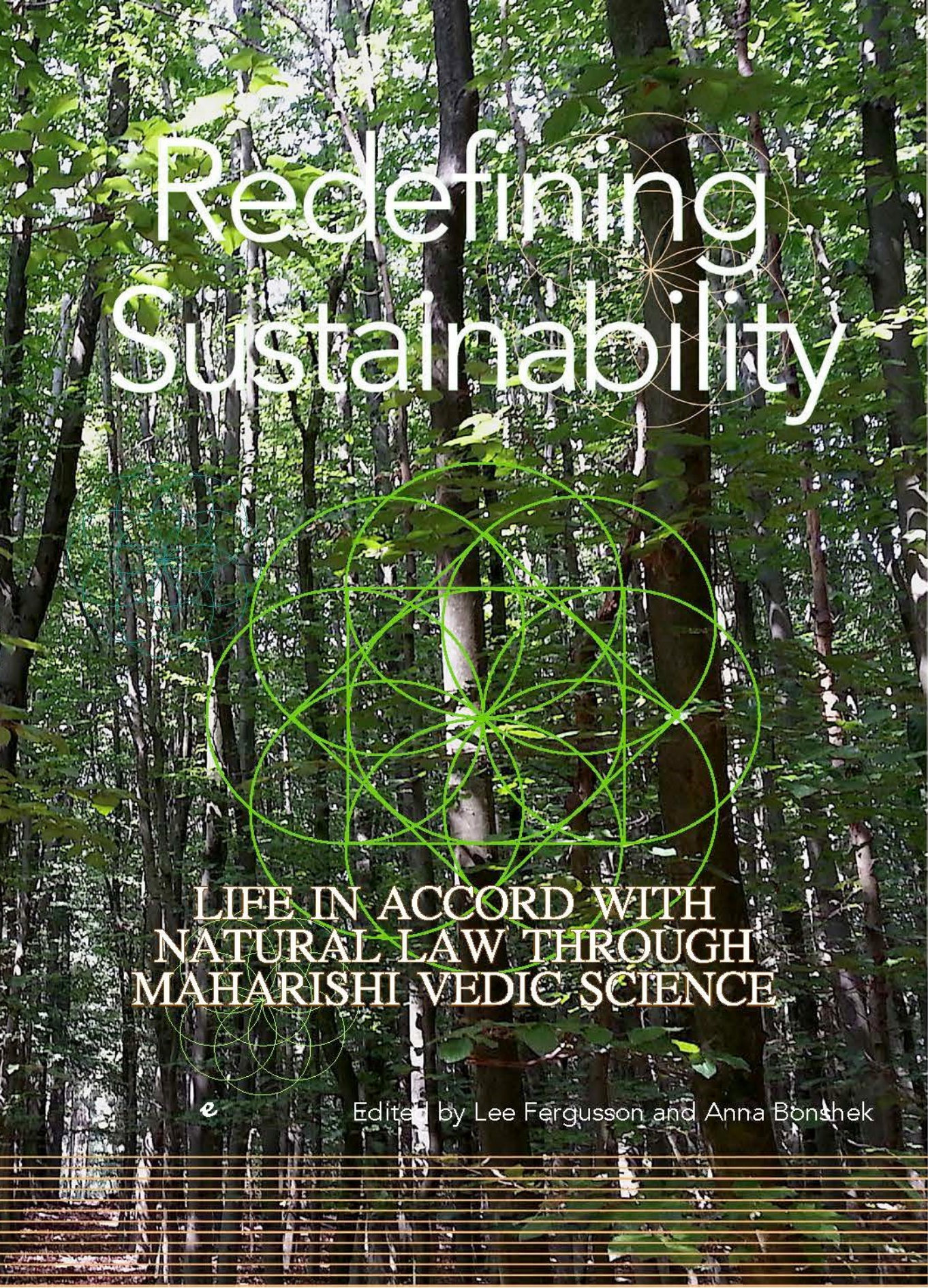
Redefining Sustainability
LIFE IN ACCORD WITH NATURAL LAW THROUGH MAHARISHI VEDIC SCIENCE
Edited by Lee Fergusson and Anna Bonshek

Redefining Sustainability

Life in Accord with Natural Law through Maharishi Vedic Science

Edited by

Lee Fergusson & Anna Bonshek

Gold Coast, Australia

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Published by:

Maharishi Vedic Research Institute Press
Gold Coast
Australia

PO Box 1620
Oxenford, Queensland 4210
Australia

Email: Editors@MaharishiVedicResearch.com

Cover design: Anna Bonshek
Copy editor: Wendy Cavanaugh

ISBN: 978-0-9872633-9-1

A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australian Capital Territory.

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Bound and printed by Digital Print Australia (DPA), Adelaide, South Australia

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To whom this book is dedicated

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Introduction

In recent years, 'sustainability' has been widely discussed in world media, in political circles, and in academia. Phrases such as environmental sustainability, sustainability accounting, sustainable marketing, corporate sustainability, urban sustainability, social sustainability, and sustainable development have all become commonplace in social discourse[i]. Even the world's largest companies routinely appeal to the noble values and ambitions of sustainability in their business philosophies and public pronouncements. For example, Rio Tinto Alcan has recently said 'we understand that having a sustainable business depends on our ability to deliver long-term value to everyone our activities touch. This means seeing the challenges of sustainability as opportunities to continuously improve the way we work'[ii]. The application of sustainability principles in human resource management and ethics[iii] and in higher education[iv] is widespread.

Notwithstanding potential reverses, such as those signaled by the Trump Administration to 'roll back environmental protections and slash environmental budgets'[v], the language of sustainability is also present in many of the policies and pronouncements of world leaders, including heads of religions and indigenous elders[vi]. For example, in 2017 New Zealand's premier Jacinda Ardern urged world leaders to act on climate change and inequality[vii], and former U.S. President Barak Obama, an outspoken champion of sustainability, said that a primary goal of his administration was 'to establish an integrated strategy towards sustainability in the [United States] Federal Government and to make reduction of greenhouse gas emissions a priority'[viii].

Pope Francis went even further and issued an environmental Encyclical in which he pointed out that creation is harmed when humanity thinks

> everything is simply our property and we use it for ourselves alone. The misuse of creation begins when we no longer recognize any higher instance than ourselves, when we see nothing else but ourselves. We [the Church] echo the reflections of numerous scientists, philosophers, theologians and civic groups, all of which have enriched the Church's thinking on these questions[ix].

leading the Pope to conclude:

> our common home is falling into serious disrepair. Hope would have us recognize that there is always a way out, that we can always redirect our steps, that we can always do something to solve our problems. Still, we can see signs that things are now reaching a breaking point, due to the rapid pace of change and degradation; these are evident in large-scale natural

> disasters as well as social and even financial crises, for the world's problems cannot be analyzed or explained in isolation. There are regions now at high risk and, aside from all doomsday predictions, the present world system is certainly unsustainable from a number of points of view, for we have stopped thinking about the goals of human activity[x].

Consistent with the Pope's view of 'our common home', Costanza, Graumlich, Steffen, and others[xi] have pointed out that issues associated with sustainability are global in nature as much as they are local, regional, or national, and adverse changes in one place can mean the same adversity may be faced in another remote or seemingly disconnected part of the world. Obvious evidence of the interconnectedness of our common home can be seen in the climatic effects of depleted ozone in the atmosphere, the influence of greenhouse gas emissions and global heating, the increased potential for global pandemics, the rise in ocean temperatures and acidification, and the pressure being placed on the world's water and food supplies.

In contemporary discourse, the concept of sustainability is often presented in relation to the environment (including the things, conditions, and processes which govern our surroundings); however, theorists have also noted the question of creating a sustainable human future relies equally on social praxis, participatory governance, and effective economic modeling[xii]. For example, in a comprehensive survey of 36 companies, Pullman, Maloni, and Carter showed in the context of sustainable supply chain management that corporate quality performance improves with environmental performance and that corporate cost performance improves with quality performance[xiii]. Similarly, while environmental sustainability is central to the model advanced by Khalili, concepts such as 'practical sustainability', which she defines as 'an integrated approach to long-term environmental sustainability'[xiv], incorporate emerging social and economic pathways to the future.

Some theorists have gone further and proposed that contemporary sustainability practises actually require new modes of knowledge production[xv], and the high-level model advanced by the Independent Research Forum (IRF) provides such a framework for shifting the emphasis away from sustainable development toward sustainable human well-being, suggesting that 'sustainable improvement in human well-being is the ultimate purpose of all development effort'[xvi]. To achieve greater balance and health in human existence, the IRF has identified four factors which directly or indirectly affect human well-being, what it calls 'transformational pathways forward': a) economic progress underpinned not by growth but by transforming the way economies are structured; b) equitable prosperity and opportunity; c) healthy and productive natural systems; and d) stakeholder engagement and collaboration. These four factors form the foundation upon which individual and social well-being might be understood and developed, and each are addressed in various ways by this book.

While the IRF framework is notable, and indeed does begin to explore concepts which operationalise well-being, such as an investment in resilience and growth models that reduce inequalities, a more expanded viewpoint is also possible. To this end, we ask as foundational tenets of sustainability science: what are the *means* by which human well-being can actually be impacted, how can well-being be *developed* through sustainable practise, and what techniques *exist* to generate a long-term state of human well-being? This type of well-being might, we propose, then serve as a stable, irreducible foundation upon which sustainable development can take place, a principle largely absent from recent published literature on sustainability and our future.

For this reason, we consider the contribution of Maharishi Vedic Science to contemporary sustainability theory and praxis because its focus is primarily on human development (specifically on the development of human consciousness) and holistic well-being as the foundations upon which sustainable social, economic, and environmental development and a sustainable future more broadly can be understood and built.

Maharishi Vedic Science is the systematic, scientific investigation and exposition of Veda and the Vedic Literature as advocated by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi[xvii]. Maharishi—founder of Maharishi Vedic University in Europe, Maharishi University of Management in the United States, and Maharishi Mahesh Yogi Vedic Vishwavidyalaya University in India—has re-enlivened the contemporary understanding of, and systematic approach to, ancient Vedic knowledge, and his unique insights importantly contain not only the theoretical bases to explain and the experiential methods to subjectively and objectively experience and thereby know Veda and the Vedic Literature, but he has also operationalised these concepts into applied social welfare programs to achieve the sustainability goals he has identified for his Vedic Science[xviii].

While remaining one integrated body of knowledge, Veda and the Vedic Literature can be divided into 40 disciplines or discrete areas of investigation, including *Ṛk Veda*, *Sāma Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, and 36 subsidiary aspects of Vedic Literature, including *Āyurveda* (the science of health), *Gandharva Veda* (the science of music), *Sthāpatya Veda* (the science of architecture, arts, and the environment), and *Vedānta* (or *Uttarā Mīmāṃsā*, the scientific inquiry into final expressions of knowledge). In Vedic Science, these disciplines are said to make up the totality of knowledge and each has a correlate in the modern scientific disciplines, which themselves collectively constitute the corpus of scientific knowledge. Moreover, each area of Veda and the Vedic Literature has been examined in terms of the structure and functioning of human physiology and the dynamics of consciousness[xix] (Nader, 1993, 1995, 2000, 2012).

At the core of Maharishi Vedic Science is the knowledge and experience of the unbounded, unchanging state of pure consciousness; in Vedic language, pure consciousness is referred to severally as: *Ātmā* (आत्मा, the Self of everyone); *Turiya Chetana* (टुरिय चेतन or Transcendental Consciousness); *Yoga* (योग or unified state of consciousness); and *Swayambhu* (स्वयम्भु, pure existence or Being). Pure

consciousness in Vedic Science, is the source of not only human intelligence and the mind, but also the home of all the Laws of Nature and hence the source of physical manifestation as observed throughout creation, a viewpoint not unfamiliar to modern physics[xx]. In essence, pure consciousness is the source of all that exists in the universe and is 'that one element in nature on the ground of which the infinite variety of creation is continuously emerging, growing, and dissolving'[xxi] and thus 'the same pure consciousness which manifests as human beings also manifests as everything else'[xxii].

Pure consciousness can be directly experienced and enlivened through the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program. Thus, through this direct experience, 'man is able to use his full potential and to make full use of his surroundings and of the almighty power of nature. The material and spiritual values of life are brought into harmony: through the art of experiencing Being it is possible to live life in eternal freedom while accomplishing the maximum in the material field'[xxiii].

Specifically, Maharishi has identified that the development of human consciousness—resulting in increased creativity, intelligence, and moral reasoning, among other features—lies at the core of any development program, be it social, economic, or environmental[xxiv]. If we want to improve our circumstances, Maharishi maintained, 'we must first improve our own minds and then we shall begin to behave well. Surroundings respond to us best if we are grounded in the art of Being, which is the technique that places our lives on a high level so that we naturally and innocently behave well in harmony and joyfulness'[xxv].

In addition to the traditional branches of Vedic knowledge, Maharishi Vedic Science has application in daily life through a variety of well-developed technologies and programs, and these applications of Vedic knowledge—in healthcare and medicine, in architecture and art, in management and government, and in education—can also be investigated scientifically. That is, each can be systematically experienced and empirically tested.

Remarkably, nearly 30 years ago Maharishi signaled 'creating pollution-free industry and a noise-free, pollution-free healthy atmosphere through [the] profuse use of solar energy [would contribute to the creation of] a post-industrial era free from the stress and strain of the industrial age'[xxvi]. He emphasised the 'only way to have pollution-free progress through new research is to comprehend how each area of infinite variety in creation always expands but does not produce pollution, because in this theme of evolution of Nature the part is always connected to the whole, so the total organizing power of Natural Law is persistently available to every stage of evolution of everything'[xxvii]. In this statement Maharishi refers to how, when every part of life is connected to the wholeness of life—when every aspect of life is connected to the evolutionary, always available, infinite organising power of Natural Law—no pollution arises, and life is always progressive.

Discussing individual thought and action in the context of individual life in accord with Natural Law, Maharishi had earlier pointed out that individuals can align their thinking and behaviour to a self-sufficient, self-perpetuating, infinitely balanced level of life, a level of life which is never depleted, the level of true sustainability. 'Only such unity with nature', Maharishi explained, 'can guarantee that in our actions we will always protect nature and in turn be protected by it'[xxviii]. Having far-reaching potential, the current volume, which seeks to redefine sustainability, was inspired by the promise of these ideas. Essentially, we assert that a pollution-free life is possible and easily attainable—that the individual and society can think and act from the sustainable foundation of nature's functioning.

From these words, we can see how Maharishi specifically addressed issues of sustainability. He has identified and encouraged, for example, 'a very intimate connection between the individual and the universe'[xxix]. In this sense, he reveals that the relationship between the individual and the environment extends to the universe, and proposed that in order to make full and proper use of the environment, in order to live in accordance with Natural Law, 'man must learn to live in harmony with nature'[xxx]. Prior to this, Maharishi had stated that 'the ecological ideal of total mutual support within the whole community is attainable on every level' through his Vedic Science, because it 'restores to everyone…the spontaneous ability to gain from and give to his environment maximum enlivenment'[xxxi]. In this way, Maharishi identifies an intimate relationship between individual thinking, action, and the environment and universe within which we live.

Maharishi Vedic Research Institute, an approved research institute (ARI) of the Australian Government, is dedicated to research which investigates, and technology which applies, the knowledge of Maharishi Vedic Science. Maharishi Vedic Research Institute has therefore initiated a series of research programs to examine and document both the core theoretical foundations of Vedic Science as well as their application to individual, social, economic, and environmental life through technology. These include investigation and documentation of the applications of Vedic knowledge, including technologies of consciousness which form an integral part of Maharishi Vedic Science, in disciplines such as education, sustainable business, art and architecture, healthcare, government and economics, consciousness studies, peace studies, and environmental science.

Of the many initiatives carried out by Maharishi Vedic Research Institute since its inception in 2014, one included the formation of a research group which, from 2016-19, investigated sustainability science, climate change, genetic engineering, circular economy, urban sustainability, and environmental science in the context of Maharishi Vedic Science. During this initiative, participants from Australia, New Zealand, The Netherlands, and the United States noted a series of key statements by Maharishi which articulated his vision for a sustainable future of humanity through his Vedic Science. This book is the result of that research initiative.

Redefining Sustainability is organised into 12 chapters, each investigating the significance of Maharishi Vedic Science for a sustainable future.

Chapter 1, **Principles and Practise of Sustainability in Maharishi Vedic Science** by Lee Fergusson, Geoffrey Wells, and David Kettle, was originally published in a 2017 Special Issue of the *Journal of Health and Environmental Research* called 'Maharishi Vedic Science: Creating a Sustainable Future'[xxxii]. In it, the authors suggest a *prima facie* case can be made that propositions in Maharishi Vedic Science may play a part in the sustainable future of humanity. They identify six fundamental principles of sustainability in Maharishi Vedic Science, including 'do not perform actions which potentially lead to an unsustainable, catastrophic future and only then try to correct them, but prevent problems before they begin' and 'by connecting the parts of life to the wholeness of life in the Unified Field of Natural Law, pollution-free progress can be maintained in society'. The authors discuss how these six principles have been operationalised in Maharishi Vedic Organic Agriculture, Vedic forestry, and non-genetically modified, pure food, among other working examples.

Chapter 2, **Responding to Climate Change: The Contribution of Maharishi Vedic Science** by Geoffrey Wells, Lee Fergusson, David Kettle, and Anna Bonshek, was first published in 2017 in *Journal of Health and Environmental Research* and subsequently in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xxxiii]. It presents a framework articulated in Maharishi Vedic Science which describes eight levels of Natural Law to embrace the complex systems of which the global climate system is part. The chapter goes on to propose how Maharishi Vedic Science may contribute to restoring balance, integration, and orderly growth to all systems from their foundation in Natural Law. According to the chapter's authors, modern analytical approaches to the serious impacts on physical, biological, and human systems impacted by climate change have so far made a limited contribution. This chapter therefore advances the promise of Maharishi Vedic Science in providing missing scientific knowledge in principle and practise.

Chapter 3 presents a new agenda for education and advances a model that integrates the development of consciousness into higher education for sustainability. Titled **Addressing the Wicked Problems of Sustainability Through Consciousness-Based Education** by Christopher Jones and Gabriel Akura, this chapter first appeared in 2017 in *Journal of Health and Environmental Research* and subsequently in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xxxiv]. Jones and Akura posit that in order to imagine and create a sustainable future, education has to be significantly rethought and redesigned. The authors start from the United Nations' *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* tackling competencies, curricula, and methods that education will need to adopt to pursue this agenda. They go on to present a new agenda structured around developing the consciousness of the knower, or learner, called Consciousness-Based Education—presenting a model that integrates the development of consciousness into higher education for sustainability.

Chapter 4, titled **Indigenous Accounts of Environmental Stewardship in Light of the Theory and Language of Maharishi Vedic Science** by Lee Fergusson, David Kettle, and Geoffrey Wells, was originally published in 2017 in *International Journal of Society, Culture and Language*[xxxv]. This chapter explores the relationship of two indigenous traditions—Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture of Australia and the Māori tradition of New Zealand, which have been identified with environmental stewardship—to Maharishi Vedic Science, and proposes that the Vedic tradition is a tradition of sustainability and ecological awareness which identifies the source of sustainability in Natural Law, the universal source of tradition, language, and knowledge.

Originally published in 2017 in the journal *Environment, Development and Sustainability*[xxxvi], Chapter 5 titled **The Personal, Social and Environmental Sustainability of Jainism in Light of Maharishi Vedic Science**, explores the relationship of Jainism and Maharishi Vedic Science and their relevance to sustainability science and ecology. The authors Lee Fergusson, Geoffrey Wells, and David Kettle point out that Jainism is a tradition of ecological awareness and sustainability. This traditional body of knowledge includes a long-standing theory and practise of personal, social, and environmental sustainability, addressing such views as the interconnectedness of humans and the Laws of Nature, the interdependence of everything in the universe, the responsibility of humans to conserve and preserve natural resources, the avoidance of wanton and unnecessary waste generation, and a general aversion to mistreating or abusing the environment. At the heart of Jainism is the Vedic approach to *Ahimsā* or non-violence. The authors also note that Maharishi referred to Mahāvīra and Ādināth as 'great luminaries of India…who maintained the eternal light of Veda, the tradition of pure knowledge, throughout the ages'.

Chapter 6, titled **Maharishi Vedic Science and Technology: Bringing Fulfilment to Urban Sustainability** by David Kettle and originally published in 2018 in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xxxvii], examines how Maharishi Vedic Science contributes to urban sustainability in the context of Maharishi's *Unified Field Chart*. The Unified Field Chart is an educational tool designed by Maharishi which shows the relationship of urban sustainability to the Unified Field of Natural Law, the home of all the Laws of Nature, which is the unmanifest source of both urban sustainability as well as the source of all knowledge and the physical universe. In this way, the Unified Field Chart enlivens the consciousness of the viewer and promotes 'enlightenment' by pointing to the means through which all knowledge, including knowledge of urban sustainability, can be enlivened and established naturally in human awareness for benefit in every phase of thought, speech, and action.

Chapter 7, titled **A Unified Field Chart of Urban Sustainability** by David Kettle, Lee Fergusson, and Geoffrey Wells and originally published in 2018 in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xxxviii], provides a detailed description of the Unified Field Chart for the discipline of urban sustainability. The Unified Field Chart displays the systems, principles, and processes of conceiving,

designing, building, and living in a sustainable, healthy urban environment, the goal of which is the fulfilment of human development and the sustainable progress and well-being of society with its source of sustainability in the Unified Field. The Chart is organised into eight vertical levels from the most universal or fundamental level at the bottom to the most applied level at the top, starting with Level 1, referred to as the Unified Field of all the Laws of Nature. This is the level of nature's intelligence, the field of non-change from which the infinite variety of nature is continuously emerging, expanding, and returning, a level Maharishi refers to as the 'first law' of nature or Natural Law.

Chapter 8, titled **Human Development and Capability: Reconstructed and Fulfilled Through Maharishi Vedic Science** by David Kettle, Geoffrey Wells, and Lee Fergusson and initially published in 2017 in *Journal of Health and Environmental Research*[xxxix], proposes that Maharishi Vedic Science fulfils the goals of human development in higher states of consciousness, where the mind, body, and senses still function but at a much more refined and integrated level of functioning—a style of functioning particularly suited to thinking and acting sustainably. The key aspect of human development explored in this chapter is that of human capabilities, discussed in the context of the 'Capability Approach' of Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum.

Chapters 9 and 10 represent two parts of an investigation into industrial sustainability and the circular economy. Chapter 9, **Industrial Sustainability and the Circular Economy as Counterparts to the Self-referral Mechanics of Natural Law: Part I—A Theoretical Foundation** by Lee Fergusson, Geoffrey Wells, and David Kettle and originally published in 2018 in *Asian Journal of Environment & Ecology*[xl], investigates the theoretical foundations of industrial sustainability and circular economy in the self-referal structure of Natural Law, as explained by Maharishi. The circular structure and self-referral loops of Natural Law are said to underlie and guide every level of a manifest hierarchy. This chapter argues that the circular economic model represents a counterpart to the self-referral mechanics of Natural Law and is therefore more in accord with Natural Law than the standard linear 'take, make, dispose' economic model, which is unsustainable due to its attitude to and management of energy and other resource portfolios, waste, and end-of-life products. Among the hallmarks of industrial sustainability is its emphasis on harnessing renewable energy and recycling principles, both designed to limit the impact of polluting activities on the environment and to improve commercial performance.

Chapter 10, **Industrial Sustainability and the Circular Economy as Counterparts to the Self-referral Mechanics of Natural Law: Part II—A Global Case Study** by Lee Fergusson and originally published in 2017 in *Open Science Journal*[xli], goes on to provide an example of how the principles and practise of circular economies can be applied to one of the world's most intractable industrial waste stream and shows how it might be managed sustainably in the future. This chapter argues that a long-term economic and environmental benefit from alumina refinery residue can be liberated when its

reuse is based on the principles of self-referral and self-interacting feedback loops as described by Maharishi Vedic Science, and suggests that the deep-rooted commercial, human, and environmental risks posed by this hazardous industrial waste stream can be minimised or even eliminated through a circular approach to waste management, thereby leading to a more sustainable economic future.

Chapter 11, titled **Creating Sustainable Urban Societies through the Group Practise of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi Program** by Kenneth L. Cavanaugh and Michael S. Dillbeck and originally published in 2017 in *Journal of Health and Environmental Research* and subsequently in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xlii], tests the hypothesis that group practise of the Transcendental Meditation and TM-Sidhi program would be sufficient to reduce collective stress and thereby contribute to creating sustainable urban environments. This chapter is part of a comprehensive empirical evaluation of the results of a prospective four-year program that sought to reduce rates of homicide and violent crime as well as to improve other measures of quality of life and public health in the United States.

Chapter 12, titled **The Effect of Coherent Collective Consciousness on National Quality of Life and Economic Performance Indicators: A Path to Economic Sustainability** by Guy Hatchard and Kenneth L. Cavanaugh and originally published in 2017 in *Journal of Health and Environmental Research* and subsequently in *Journal of Maharishi Vedic Research Institute*[xliii], explores a phenomenon which the authors suggest is a prescription for balanced and sustained economic growth based on a method of enhancing quality of life and innovation among a population. Specifically, using cross-country panel regression, they explore the economies of New Zealand and Norway compared to 44 other developed nations on the Institute for Management Development (IMD) Index of National Competitive Advantage when New Zealand and Norway passed the predicted national coherence threshold of1% of their populations instructed in the Transcendental Meditation program or its advanced technique, the Transcendental Meditation-Sidhi program.

The book concludes with contributor biographies, a bibliography, and an index to key words and phrases. Where chapters have been published previously, these have been revised and reprinted with permission.

Footnotes

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